REBEL DESTINY

782 241 535 Among the people of one group, the principal ceremony may be held in the clearing itself. The drums are brought, and men and women and children pray for fertility. The beautifully carved apinti drum sounds the invocation to the Great God and to the ancestors, while the tall agida drums are brought to call the earth spirits. Two by two the men dance susa, the dance which in pantomime reproduces an ancient warrior's combat with spear and shield, the winner taking on a new combatant, until the final winner is given a wand as a reward, and gains for himself the title of "G'aman of Susa" until the next dance is held. Other dances follow. Perhaps the women now line up in two long rows facing each other, and dance bandamba, the dance which celebrates marriage and the birth of twins, and the birth of a child who is born feet foremost. The motions are the slow rhythmic manipulations of the muscles of hips and abdomen. It is a dance of fertility, danced by the very young girls as well as by those who have borne children. But the women who are past the age for dancing sit with their men, arms interlaced, swaying to the rhythms of the songs they sing. . . . There are offerings to the earth spirits, poured upon the earth out of black obia pots and calabashes, while other offerings are set upon the ground for the ancestors.

[585] [845] [840] [888] [469]

In another settlement, the ritual would be chiefly carried on in the village itself, and there might be a local dance of fertility, danced nowhere else on the river. "An old, old ancestress taught it to us," the villagers would say.

[842]

462 241 762 539 When it is time to plant, the woman plants with the man's help.

"When I plant a new field," said the younger woman, "I pray as I work."

And this is her prayer:

O Sky God, Mother of the Earth, Ancestors,
I am planting a field,
Make it bear;
People who come to me must eat,

Herskovits & Herskovits E-4 (1958-1959) 1934
Bush Negroes
Saramacca

gods do not come to them." There was in her voice contempt for women who had no gods. She was of a reddish-brown color, taller and more slender than most, and the great coils of brass about her arms and ankles told that her beauty had had full recognition. These had come to her at marriage, as had the small earrings of gold which the bassia had brought to her from French Guiana. With these, too, had come cloths and handkerchiefs, beads and carvings.

If white women had no gods, did they know any of the other things which women must know? Did the white woman wear an apron underneath all her cloths, as women should? Were her thighs cicatrized? Did she cook for her husband, or other men, when she should be isolated in the special house provided for women's monthly visits? Did she purify herself with sacred clay when she emerged from isolation in order not to spoil her husband's obias, for which contact with a woman who has her menses is the deadliest taboo? Why, having borne children, did her figure not show it?

"Have you drums?" the bassia's wife asked. "Without drums, how do you pray? How do you dance?"

Dancing without drums availed nothing.

"White women have no gods. The gods do not come to them. They are not troubled by the need to dance. White women do not pray," she concluded, seeing that what dancing the white woman did could only be a feeble affair.

"I will send my son to your country. The men who go to the French shore say it is good to know how to count the white man's way. My woman-child I will never send," she finished with finality.

Now it was the white woman's turn to ask a few questions, having done explaining how her boots laced, and why it was that she was dressed very much as her husband was dressed.

The white clay in the hair and on the face of a small child was medicine. The child's mother had washed for her god that morning. He was a god whose day for dancing was Wednesday, and now, feeling the god stir in her, she would

Is Henderson & Henderson 1-3 (1819-1908) 1934
HD Book Negroes HD
Economics

name which was kept secret and never spoken except in states of possession or when the obia man called on a person's spirit. For girls, Amba for a Saturday child, Afi for one born on Friday, Adjoba for Wednesday; and for the boys some of the names were Kwaku, for Monday, Yao for Thursday, Kofi for Friday, and Kwasi for Sunday. Then there was the name which the father gave, and after that any of the family who cared added a name and made the child a present.

From the day it was born until it was at least two years old a child lived with its mother's breast. For twelve months and five more of this time the woman could not go to the hammock with a man. It was then that her husband went to the distant French shore to work or to the railhead. But after seventeen months of nursing were past, he came back.

"If a child is made before a woman gets back her menstrual flow, then it is a god. It is Kesefu. A child born feet first some call Agoes, and some Asseng. The child born after twins we call Does, and twins are Hohobi. Now it is in your book. You will give those names to your children, and your sister's children. No one will know at all what names these are. No one will be able to harm them."

6

In the quarter immediately adjoining that of the Grandman there was great activity. Six or seven men and boys were at work on a new house, for the youngest daughter of the family was ready for marrying, and now the men were helping her suitor to build a house for her in her village.

From the same quarter, behind a house which stood in the shade, came the laughter of young girls. We made our way past the house and saw four girls ranging in age from thirteen to sixteen seated on a log. One of these held her head back, and an older girl was bending over her. They called to us as we passed.

"We are cutting kamemba. Do you want some cuts, too?"

These were not new cuts which were being made, for with perhaps one exception, the girls were all nubile, and

M Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SRS Bush Negroes SRS
—Saramacca

houses would have to be built—one in his village where they would live, and one in the provision ground for his wife to sleep in when she worked in the field.

"Must you yourself build the house, Bayo?"

"My family will help me. Making a house is hard work, too, and a man must have clever fingers for weaving the walls."

There would have to be stools, and several well-ornamented combs. A clothes beater would have to be provided for the bride, and a peanut pounding board, and one mortar and pestle at least, and food stirrers and rice trays. A cassava squeezer would have to be woven, and a sifter and grater for the roots that were made into bread. And baskets, too, he would have to weave.

"This is not all. This is only what I must make. Other things I must buy for her."

He would have to provide cloths when the wedding day came, and cloths for his mother-in-law, too. The small kerchiefs which were folded in triangular shape and were worn about the waist as the sign that a woman was married he would also have to furnish, and two large cloths, each the size of three tunics. He would have to buy an iron cooking pot, and some small fishhooks with lines, and some cups from the white man's city. He was going to give his girl a pair of earrings, and a string of beads. Then there would have to be the hammock.

Bayo laughed, "For a marriage, there must be a hammock."

There were other things he was going to buy for his girl. Brass arm and leg ornaments he would buy, since his girl was already a fine dancer.

And when all these things were bought and given, then it was time for the marriage.

"But it doesn't always happen that the marriage takes place," said Bayo. "Sometimes the girl's people do not like what the man has done. They have another krutu, and decide the man should not marry into their family."

Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

584 This was a disgrace. A man was not looked upon as a good suitor by other girls when this happened to him. Everyone said he was worthless. It often came to pass that such a man could not get a woman to marry him. Not
[587] even a widow whose husband had left no brothers, and who had to cut her own field, would consent to live with him.

Sometimes it happened, too, that the man's family did not approve of the girl. When she came to help his mother, they saw that she was lazy and inept, that she would never be able to feed herself and her husband and her children with what crops she raised, that whatever handiwork she touched, she could achieve nothing pleasing. If that happened, then his family met in kruta, and a decision was reached to break off the match. When that was done, the man often had to forfeit the gifts he had made the girl and her mother, but when the woman's family turned the man down, then they came with all the gifts he had given, and often an additional offering as well for what labor he had done for her family.

"With me it is not so. My family likes my girl, and hers likes me."

• 585 When the gifts were accumulated and the houses and boats and fields provided, then, if the girl was ripe for marrying, the marriage day was set, and on that day the girl was brought to the house where she would live. Both families were gathered in the village, and the uncles and old women addressed themselves to the young couple, admonishing them to live well together, and to observe the traditional ways.

[262] At night while the villagers danced bandamba, and feasted on the rum and salt beef and other delicacies which the man and his family had provided, the couple were led to the house which had been newly built for them, though sometimes they were taken to the house of one of the old people of the man's great family. In Bayo's village, the girl first was conducted to the house by a sister who helped her make the preparations for the night. They tied the hammock and then water was brought. This done, the man

M. Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1929-1930) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

was called, and the couple were left alone, while outside the villagers danced and sang of fertility all night.

In the morning the man's brothers come to the house to find out if she had ever before been to the hammock with another man.

"What happens if they find that she has?"

Bayo's reply was prompt. "Usually nothing. The man doesn't give her as many presents as he would have given her. If he had promised her thirty pangi, he would only give her fourteen. If he liked her, he wouldn't turn her away."

"What would happen to her, though? Would they punish her?"

"They say, Bak'a, sometimes a man likes her better for it. It shows him other men had cared for her. But her family scolds her, and sometimes punishes her, too, and the women of the village talk plenty. They pull their lip at her the next morning, and later, whenever there is a quarrel, they talk about it again."

But if the girl were found to have been a virgin, then all the people danced, and there was a great feast, with dances to all the gods.

"You must come back for my wedding, Bak'a, you and your woman. Then you will see dancing!"

"But your girl is still a child, Bayo."

"Ah, no. She is getting her cuts on her thighs. She wears a cloth." He knew, because on his way down from the Granman he had stopped at her village and when the family was not about he had made sure. "If you come next year, we will both be ready."

The two men still followed the bush trail when Bayo had finished his account of how the marriage was conducted. Now and then Trous would appear, wag his tail, and be off into the underbrush again.

"Tell me, Bayo," the white man began, "do many girls go with a man to the hammock before they are married?"

He waited for a moment before he answered. Smiling, he ran his hand over his newly braided head with the innumerable little braids between the lines of white.

"Most [illegible] them, Bak'a," he said.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

It is indulged in as naturally as the other bodily functions.

"Marriage" is a convenient term for describing cohabitation among the Djukas, but it must be remembered that to them marriage is a purely economic institution. There is little ceremony. No one objects to getting married, because divorce is instantaneous and easy. The bonds of marriage are loose, and adultery, to use our harsh term, is customary.

Courting consists in presenting the prospective bride with elaborate wood carvings of useful implements. This wood carving has been developed by the Djukas to a high point of artistic perfection, as can be seen from the illustrative specimens, of which more will be said later. The approaching marriage is not looked upon as a departure from the maternal group; it is simply an arrangement for providing the man with a cook and the woman with children. The marriage of a captain or a Granman differs in no wise from any other; no especial care is taken of his bride.

We encountered two varieties of the process of choosing a husband. In the first, the girl has little to say, her husband being selected for her by her parents. In the second and more frequent practice the woman marries the man of her own choice, the parents making sure that the intended husband is a good provider. But since every Djuka buck is trained to the jungle crafts from childhood, this requirement can almost be taken for granted.

The husband marries frequently. He may marry outside of his village, or outside of his lo, but never outside of the tribe. Marriage requires a bride price, consisting of pieces of

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Marriage requires a bride price, consisting of pieces of cloth, sugar, tobacco, and some carved wooden implements, such as combs, paddles, trays. These are handed over to the bride's family as presents. Then the wife simply moves into her husband's hut, or he into hers. Despite their pre-marital promiscuity, it is said that on the bridal night all the inhabitants of a Bush Negro village will gather outside the hut to hear what the husband has to say regarding the bride's virginity. If the girl is not a virgin, part of the bride price may be refunded, at the husband's discretion. The gathering on such an occasion is attended by much jocularity.

The Djuka husband builds a hut for each one of his women and has another for himself, to which he may retire whenever he feels the need of bachelor seclusion. The woman sleeps in her own hut, cooks, and raises her children there. The husband comes to her when he wants to, and leaves her for another wife when impulse so guides him. She seldom quarrels with the other wives, who may even live in separate villages.

Each wife has her own provision ground, where she grows rice and cassava; her husband has cleared it for her. The cassava fields are owned by individual women, but are held in very loose tenure. At harvest time, or when a plague of insects is threatening, the women of several households work together in common.

The man's hut is called his *gadu oso*, or "treasure house." It serves to impress his women with his importance and wealth. They are forbidden to enter it, but, woman-like, they insist on peeping in. So he keeps many boxes and wood carv-

/14 cont./

584 and, once this has been promised, she does indeed continue to be regarded specifically as the betrothed of the person who made the request. As soon as she is marriageable, she is handed over to her man with or without her consent, and it may be regarded as a rare case when such a promise is broken.

[431] The man to whom she is promised sometimes does not see his future wife before the occasion of her betrothal, but usually he is concerned with her upbringing and from time to time gives her presents consisting of money, pantjes, and corals.

[591] Some take the girl promised to them even when she is only three or four years old in order to rear her further.

[672] The promising of newborn girls takes place for the most part [682] when there are obligations between parents, as was reported in Chapter III, and in the case of enslavement which is done to one [567] family by another in case of poisoning, and so forth.

586 It is an everyday occurrence that a woman leaves her husband or a man his wife for another.

595 Polygyny is much practiced, and among my workers I know several who have three or four wives, most of whom are very young. Some, however, have only one wife.

It is noteworthy that all the wives sleep with the man in one hut, while in addition he perhaps keeps with him a girl whom he [513] is bringing up to be his wife. One wife will be /15/ with him in the hammock and lies with her feet at the head end of the man and the latter in turn with his feet at the head end of the women, while the other women sleep in their hammocks.

[484] If a Bush Negro goes out, be it to celebrate a festival or in order to float wood to the town, he takes all his wives with him; only in case of illness do they remain behind.

His wives get money separately, and therefore they must also separately provide for his food, so that one cooks the food in the morning, another at midday, a third in the evening, etc. [578] This way of life and their jealous nature frequently bring about household quarrels that rarely end in any way other than bloody fights.

585 Upon the conclusion of a marriage the man is obligated to 583 give the parents of the girl as a marriage portion a long, broad,

/15 cont./

585 white cotton sleeping blanket, various colored cloths and pantjes,
[583] some earthenware, such as bowls and plates, iron pots and pans, and the like, while he is obligated on the occasion to provide for an ample supply of strong drink and sugar wine.

They do not have festivities, games, or dancing in connection with their marriages.

586 If a marriage is dissolved, then each of the two parties again goes to his own family; in case those concerned in it and the elders disapprove of this, however, it happens that man and wife are forced to continue to live with each other, especially when there are no substantial reasons and grievances.

593 The man is obligated to provide his wife or his wives with food, clothing, and ornaments; she, to follow the man everywhere, to cook for him, to wash, and to take care of the housekeeping.

264 The wives are neat in an exemplary fashion; plates, bowls,
252 and pans are always kept extremely clean, and they also see to it that everything is extremely clean in connection with cooking.

841 If they find themselves in a period of menstruation, they
302 indicate this immediately to the husband by withdrawing from his dwelling and staying in seclusion with other women; they neither cook nor do the least thing for him in this state, do not even come within sight of him, and remain secluded to the end; when they have cleaned and dressed themselves, they decorate their shoulders and arms with white stripes as a token /16/ that they have again
[386] returned to their normal state. The stripes are made by mixing
[824] pounded adroe (1) with ground chalk and water.

1. A tuberous root-stalk from the Cyperus rotundus L.

Sometimes they also smear the forehead and the neck in this way and appear thus before their husbands.

841 During their seclusion another woman, who is a member of
571 the family or possibly a female friend, daily prepares and brings the
252 food, which, however, is at the expense of the secluded wife. They perform this service for each other mutually.

/143 cont./

585 613 The head of the lineage calls a classificatory sister of the girl. He takes her by the hand and leads her to the suitor's envoy, saying: "I give thee this woman."

Then he calls a classificatory brother of the girl. He leads him to the suitor's envoy, saying: "I give thee this man."

This second part of the ceremony is purely symbolic; there is no question at all that this man and this woman are marrying. Its purpose seems to be to show the perfect equality of the man and the woman in the marriage.

[569] The words pronounced in the invocation to the ancestors are: "We give (this) woman to (this) man; may they live together, may they not be sick, may they have children, children who live."

[584] There is no need for the assent of the woman's father.

585 [583] If it is a question of the first marriage of a young girl, the fiancé comes, aided by his friends, to build her a house. He builds her a boat and buys for her what is necessary for

[429] domestic life. When the person who is bringing up the girl judges the time to be ripe, she gives her the pãŋgi, garment of married women, authorizing thus the consummation of the marriage.

[613] [569] The husband who built the house asks the elders of his wife's lineage to come in front of the house to throw tafia, to ask the ancestors that the couple be fecund and live a long time in this house.

584 613 Here, for example, is how the marriage proposal to Chitaïna (Aw.B.1, F43, Asisi village) by Déési (L1, F45, Loka village) proceeded in 1948.

To represent him Déési had sent his classificatory brother Tamu /144/ (L1, F32), older than he by about 15 years, and his classificatory aunt, Yaana (L1, E39). (See the genealogical table of the Lapé lineage.)

/144 cont./

584 613 The envoys, after making it known the evening before that they were coming, presented themselves at 10 o'clock in the morning in Asisi-Awara Bakka village. Present were Irma, Chitaïna's mother; Alémin (Aw.B.1, E40), actual uncle; Antonu (Aw.B.1, E47), one of the oldest of the classificatory uncles; Namu (Aw.B.1, E48), classificatory aunt; and the girl's brothers and sisters by the same mother.

Tamu took the floor, unfolding Déési's merits and stating that he had serious intentions. The eldest of the uncles declared 585 613 acceptance. Chitaïna having fled according to custom, he took her young sister Boomi, who was only five years old, by the hand and led her to Tamu, saying, "I give thee this woman." Then he took Abéni, Chitaïna's older brother, by the hand and led him to Yaana, saying, "I give thee this man."

[569] Next, tafia was poured on the ground while the ancestors were invoked in favor of the /new/ household.

The liter of tafia brought by Déési was shared symbolically in the evening among all the village inhabitants including the Afi lineage there.

585 431 For the installation of the household, since there was no more room near Irma's house to build another, the latter gave one of the two houses she possessed.

584 602 [595] Here is still another example concerning the two wives of Fintiman (Dju, F6, Boniville village).

For his first wife Mimi (K3, E156, Boniville) he sent his brother and sister by the same mother, Klémenti and Eliana, who approached Mimi's mother and her classificatory uncle Lébiman.

Fintiman had previously made sure of the agreement of his own father Malobi (Dip. I, E50), who had brought him up, of his mother Béniti, and of his uncle Diolè (Dju, E1), the eldest of the classificatory uncles.

/156 cont./

586 [128] The estimate of the average number of divorces for women born before 1896 is probably lower than the actual number, their first divorces not being well known to our informants. It is probably in the neighborhood of two.

586 593 178 The increase in frequency of divorces among young women is striking. It is related to the weakening of the authority, very strong in former times, exercised by mothers over their daughters. Here are two examples concerning two girls we have known since their childhood.

836 Lomé (L2, F74, Boniville) born in 1938, began to cause people to talk about her in 1954. She was deflowered by N..., who did not want to marry her. Then she had relations with Asadam (K, Boniville), who did not want to marry her either. She was beaten; she continued to see him. Now this is extremely shameful for a girl because it is placing herself in a state [558] of inferiority with respect to a man, when her self-respect consists in making a contract between equals.

582 Her brother Amèmbé beat her, and she ended up by marrying Pitipiti (Aw.B.2, Asisi village), who formally asked for her in marriage in 1956. This marriage lasted less than a 586 587 year. In 1957 Lomé divorced him to marry Djoni (Kotika village).

584 Aguba (D u, G14), girl of Asisi-Dju village, born in 1941, had been proposed to with the customary formalities in May, 1956 by Païtiki (L2, Loka village), a young man of 18. It was 584 agreed that the engaged couple would wait two years. But 585 Païtiki did not wait and consummated the marriage clandestinely at the end of a few months. Lènga, Aguba's aunt and [429] guardian, became very angry and beat her. She did not give her the [illegible] until May, 1957. The marriage lasted only a few 586 months. /157/ By the end of 1957 Aguba was breaking off with Païtiki and beginning openly to look for adventures.